A

SERMON

Preached at

WHITE-HALL

BEFORE THE

QUEEN

ON THE

Monthly Fast-day,

September 16th 1691.

By the Most Reverend Father in God,

JOHN Lord Arch-Bishop of *Canterbury*,

Primate and Metropolitan of all *England*:

And One of Their Majesties most Honourable Privy-Council.

Tho. Sen

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I

ZECHARIAH VII. 5.

Speak unto all the People of the Land, and to the Prieſts, ſaying, When ye faſted and mourned in the fifth and ſeventh month, even thoſe ſeventy years, DID YE AT ALL FAST UNTO ME, EVEN UNTO ME?

IN the beginning of this *Chapter* the People of the *Jews*, who were then rebuilding the Temple at *Jeruſalem*, and had already far advanced the work, though it was not perfectly finiſh'd till about two years after, ſend to the *Prieſts* and the *Prophets*, to enquire of them, whether they ſhould ſtill continue the *Faſt* of the *fifth* month, which they had begun in *Babylon* and continued to obſerve during the ſeventy years of their Captivity, in a ſad remembrance of the deſtruction of the City and Temple of *Jeruſalem*; or ſhould not now rather turn it into a Day of feaſting and gladneſs?

To this enquiry God by his Prophet returns an anſwer in this, and the following *Chapter*. And firſt he expoſtulates with them concerning thoſe their monthly Faſts, whether they did in-

deed deſerve that name, and were not rather a mere ſhew and pretence of a Religious Faſt, *verſ.* 4, 5. *Then came the word of the Lord of Hoſts unto me, ſaying; Speak unto all the People of the Land, and to the Prieſts, ſaying, When ye faſted and mourned in the fifth and ſeventh month, even thoſe ſeventy years, did ye at all faſt unto me, even unto me?* The enquiry was particularly concerning the *Faſt* of the *Fifth* month, becauſe the occaſion of that was more conſiderable than of all the other; but the anſwer of God mentions the *Faſts* of the *fifth* and *ſeventh* month, theſe two being probably obſerv'd with greater ſolemnity than the other.

But for our clearer underſtanding of this, it will be requiſite to conſider the original and occaſion of all their *monthly Faſts*: which as appears from other places of Scripture, in ſhort was this: When the *Jews* were carried away Captive into *Babylon*, in a deep ſenſe of this great Judgment of God upon them for their Sins, and of the heavy affliction which they lay under, they appointed *four annual Faſts*, which they obſerved during their ſeventy years Captivity; *viz.* the *Faſt* of the *fourth* month, in remembrance of the Enemies breaking through

the Wall of *Jeruſalem*, which we find mention'd, *Jer.* 52. 6, 7. The *Faſt* of the *fifth* month, in memory of the deſtruction of the City and Temple of *Jeruſalem*, *verſ.* 12, 13. The *Faſt* of the *ſeventh* month, in remembrance of the ſlaying of *Gedaliah*, upon which followed the diſperſion of the *Jews*, of which we have an account, *Jer.* 42. 1, 2. And the *Faſt* of the *tenth* month, in memory of the beginning of the Siege of *Jeruſalem*, of which we find mention, 2 *Kings* 25. 1.

In this order we find theſe *four* annual Faſts mention'd *Zechar.* 8. 19. not according to the order of the Events, but of the Months of the ſeveral years in which theſe Events happened: And there likewiſe God gives a full anſwer to this enquiry concerning the continuance of theſe *annual Faſts*, namely, that they ſhould for the future be turned into ſolemn Days of joy and gladneſs. *And the word of the Lord of Hoſts came unto me, ſaying, Thus ſaith the Lord of Hoſts, the Faſt of the fourth month, and the Faſt of the fifth, and the Faſt of the ſeventh, and the Faſt of the tenth, ſhall be to the Houſe of* Judah *joy and gladneſs, and cheerfull Feaſts.* *Zech.* 8. 18, 19.

I return now to the Text, *Did ye at all faſt unto me, even unto me?* that is, did theſe *Faſts* truly ſerve to any Religious end and purpoſe? Did not the People content themſelves with a mere external ſhew and performance, without any inward affliction and humiliation of their Souls, in order to a real repentance? Did they not ſtill go on in their ſins; nay, and add to them upon theſe Occaſions, faſting for ſtrife and debate and oppreſſion? In a word, were they not worſe rather than better for them? And therefore God had no regard to them, as it follows in this *Chapter*; *Thus ſpeaketh the Lord of Hoſts, ſaying; Execute judgment, and ſhew mercy and compaſſion every man to his brother; and oppreſs not the widows nor the fatherleſs, the ſtranger nor the poor; and let none of you imagine miſchief againſt his brother in your heart: But they refuſed to hearken, and pull'd away the ſhoulder, and ſtopped their ears that they ſhould not hear; yea, they made their heart as an Adamant ſtone, leſt they ſhould hear the Law and the words which the Lord of Hoſts hath ſent by his ſpirit in the former Prophets: Therefore came great wrath from the Lord of Hoſts: Therefore it is come to paſs, that as He cryed and they would not hear; ſo they cryed, and I would not hear, ſaith the Lord of Hoſts.* So

Verſ. 9, 10, 11, 12, 13.

So that notwithſtanding theſe outward Solemnities of Faſting and Prayer, here was nothing of a Religious Faſt; *did ye at all faſt unto me, even unto me?* They were ſenſible of the Judgments of God which were broken in upon them, but they did not turn from their ſins, but perſiſted ſtill in their obſtinacy and diſobedience.

And what God here by the Prophet *Zechary* calls *faſting unto Him, even unto Him*, the Prophet *Iſaiah* calls *the Faſt which God hath choſen, and an acceptable day to the Lord. Wherefore have we faſted, ſay they, and thou ſeeſt not? Wherefore have we afflicted our ſouls, and thou takeſt no knowledge? Behold, ye faſt for ſtrife and debate, and to ſmite with the fiſt of wickedneſs: ye ſhall not faſt as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high. Is it ſuch a Faſt as I have choſen, a Day for a man to afflict his Soul? Is it to bow down his head as a bulruſh, and to ſpread ſackcloth and aſhes under him? Wilt thou call this a Faſt and an acceptable day to the Lord? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are caſt out to thy houſe; when thou ſeeſt the naked that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thy ſelf from thine own fleſh? Then ſhall thy light break forth*

forth as the morning, and thy ſalvation ſhall ſpring forth ſpeedily: Then ſhalt thou call and the Lord ſhall anſwer, &c.

From all which paſſages we may eaſily underſtand wherein theſe *Monthly Faſts* of the *Jews* were defective, and what was the fault that God finds with them when he expoſtulates ſo ſeverely in the *Text*: *When ye faſted and mourned in the fifth and ſeventh Month, even theſe ſeventy years, did ye at all faſt unto me, even unto me?* In the general the fault which God finds with them was this, that theſe Solemnities did not ſerve any real end and purpoſe of Religion, but fail'd in their main deſign, which was a ſincere repentance and reformation of their lives: For which reaſon He tells them that they were not at all acceptable to Him, nor eſteem'd by Him as perform'd *unto Him*, becauſe they did not anſwer the true intention and deſign of them.

My work at this time ſhall be, *Firſt*, to conſider in general what it is to *faſt* unto God, that is, to keep a truly Religious Faſt. *Secondly*, to bring the matter nearer to our ſelves, I ſhall conſider more particularly, what the Duty of this Day, appointed by their *Majeſties* for a Solemn

lemn Humiliation and Repentance throughout the Nation, does require at our hands.

I. I shall consider in general what it is to *fast unto God*, that is, to keep a truly Religious Fast. And of this I shall give an account in the following particulars. *First*, a truly Religious Fast consists in the afflicting of our Bodies by a strict abstinence, that so they may be fit and proper instruments to promote and help forward the grief and trouble of our minds. *Secondly*, in the humble Confession of our Sins to God with shame and confusion of face, and with a hearty contrition and sorrow for them. *Thirdly*, in an earnest deprecation of God's displeasure, and humble supplications to Him that he would avert his Judgments and turn away his Anger from us. *Fourthly*, in Intercession with God for such spiritual and temporal Blessings upon our selves and others as are needfull and convenient. *Fifthly*, in Alms and Charity to the poor, that our Humiliation and Prayers may find acceptance with God. I do but mention these particulars, that I may more largely insist upon that which I mainly intended, and proposed to consider in the next place, namely I.

II. What

II. II. What the Duty of this Day, appointed by their *Majeſties* for a Solemn Humiliation and Repentance throughout the Nation, doth require at our hands. And this I ſhall endeavour to comprize in the following particulars. *Firſt*, that we ſhould humble our ſelves before God every one for his own perſonal Sins, whereby he hath provoked God, and increaſed the publique guilt, and done his part to bring down the judgments and vengeance of God upon the Nation. *Secondly*, that we ſhould likewiſe heartily lament and bewail the Sins of others; eſpecially the great and crying Sins of the Nation, committed by all Ranks and Orders of men amongſt us, and whereby the wrath and indignation of Almighty God hath been ſo juſtly incenſed againſt us. *Thirdly*, we ſhould moſt importunately deprecate thoſe terrible Judgments of God to which theſe our great and crying Sins have ſo juſtly expoſed us. *Fourthly*, we ſhould pour out our earneſt prayers and ſupplications to Almighty God for the preſervation of their *Majeſties* Sacred Perſons, and for the eſtabliſhment and proſperity of their Government, and for the good ſucceſs of their Arms and Forces

by

by Sea and Land. *Fifthly*, our Faſting and Prayers ſhould be accompanied with our Charity and Alms to the poor and needy. *Laſtly*, we ſhould proſecute our Repentance and good Reſolutions to the actual Reformation and Amendment of our lives. Of theſe I ſhall, by God's aſſiſtance, ſpeak as briefly and as plainly as I can, and ſo as every one of us may underſtand what God requires of him upon ſo ſolemn an Occaſion as this.

Firſt, we ſhould humble our ſelves before God every one for his own perſonal Sins and miſcarriages, whereby he hath provoked God, and increaſed the publique guilt, and done his part to bring down the Judgments and Vengeance of God upon the Nation. Our Humiliation and Repentance ſhould begin with our ſelves and our own Sins, becauſe Repentance is always deſign'd to end in Reformation; but there cannot be a general Reformation without the Reformation of particular perſons which do conſtitute and make up the generality.

And this *Solomon* preſcribes as the true method of a National Reformation, and the proper effect of a publick Humiliation and Repentance; in that admirable Prayer of his at the Dedicati-

1 *Kings* 8. 37, 38, 39, 40.

on of the Temple: *If there be,* ſays he, *in the Land famine; if there be peſtilence, blaſting, mildew, locuſt, or if there be caterpiller; or if their Enemy beſiege them in the Land of their Cities: whatever plague, whatever ſickneſs there be; what prayer or ſupplication ſoever be made by any man, or by all thy People* Iſrael, WHO SHALL KNOW EVERY MAN THE PLAGUE OF HIS OWN HEART, *and ſpread forth his hands towards this Houſe: Then hear thou in Heaven thy dwelling-place, and forgive, and doe, and give to every man according to his way, whoſe heart thou knoweſt, for thou, even thou onely, knoweſt the hearts of all the children of men; that they may fear thee, all the days which they live in the Land which thou gaveſt to their Fathers.*

You ſee here that in caſe of any publick Judgment or Calamity the Humiliation and Repentance of a Nation muſt begin with particular perſons: *What prayer or ſupplication ſoever be made by any man, or by all thy People* Iſrael, WHO SHALL KNOW EVERY MAN THE PLAGUE OF HIS OWN HEART: *Then hear thou in Heaven thy dwelling-place, and forgive.* Particular perſons muſt be convinced of their perſonal ſins and tranſgreſſions, before God will hear the prayers and forgive the Sins of a Nation.

And

And becauſe we cannot perform this part of confeſſing and bewailing our own perſonal Sins, and of teſtifying our particular repentance for them, in the publique Congregation, any otherwiſe than by joining with them in a general humiliation and repentance; therefore we ſhould doe well, on the Day before the publique Faſt, or at leaſt the Morning before we go to the publique Aſſembly, to humble our ſelves before God in our Families, and eſpecially in our Cloſets; confeſſing to Him, with great ſhame and ſorrow, all the particular Sins and Offences, together with the ſeveral aggravations of them, which we have been guilty of againſt the Divine Majeſty, ſo far as we are able to call them particularly to our remembrance; and earneſtly to beg of God the pardon and forgiveneſs of them, for his mercies ſake in *Jeſus Chriſt.*

And ſo likewiſe, after we return from the Church, we ſhould retire again into our Cloſets, and there renew our Repentance, with moſt ſerious and ſincere reſolutions of reforming in all thoſe particulars which we have confeſſed and repented of. And if we would have our reſolutions to come to any good, we muſt make them as diſtinct and particular as we can; and

charge it upon our ſelves, as to ſuch and ſuch Sins, for which we have declared our ſorrow and repentance, that we will amend and doe better for the future.

And we ſhould endeavour alſo, to fortifie theſe good reſolutions, in the beſt manner we can, by ſerious conſideration and by ſolemn promiſes of better obedience, and of a more conſcientious care of our lives and all our actions for the future: And then, with the greateſt earneſtneſs and importunity, we ſhould implore the aſſiſtance of God's grace and Holy Spirit to this purpoſe.

By this means the great end of a ſolemn Faſt and Humiliation will be in ſome good meaſure attain'd, and not wholly defeated, as for the moſt part it is, by being hudled up and loſt in a confuſed and general Repentance, which commonly ends together with the publique Aſſembly, without any real and permanent effect upon particular perſons: Perhaps a great part of the Congregation may have been in ſome degree ſorry for their Sins; but after all no man forſakes them, nor is the better for his ſorrow, but leaves that behind him in the Church, and carries home with him the ſame affection for his

Sins

Sins which he had before, and a ſecret reſolution not to leave them.

Thus it was with the People of the *Jews*. They had their ſolemn monthly Faſts, in which they made a great ſhew of Humiliation, *hanging down their heads like a bulruſh for a day, and ſpreading ſackcloth and aſhes under them*: But there was no inward change of their minds, no real reformation of their lives; and aſſoon as ever the publique Solemnity was over, they turned every one to his former evil courſe. So God complains of them; *I hearkned*, ſays He, *and I heard, but they ſpake not aright; no man repented him of his wickedneſs, ſaying, what have I done? but they turned every one to his courſe, as the horſe ruſheth into the battel.* *They ſpake not aright*, that is, they did not take the right method for an effectual Repentance: They humbled themſelves indeed before God, and repented at random for the Sins of the Nation in general, which they were all of them ready enough to acknowledge, and to lay a heavy load of guilt upon the Community: But all this while, they never reflected upon themſelves in particular; they had no ſenſe, no conviction of their own perſonal faults and miſcarriages, without which there can be no *Jer.* 8. 6.

true

true general Repentance: *No man repented of his wickedneſs, ſaying, what have I done?*

And as they had no ſenſe of their own particular Sins which they had been guilty of, ſo they had no thought of leaving them; but aſſoon as ever the publique Faſting and Humiliation was over, they return'd to them again with the ſame eager and furious appetite; *they turned every one to his courſe, as the horſe ruſheth into the battel,* that is, without any conſideration, or ſenſe of danger.

Secondly, we ſhould likewiſe upon this *Day*, heartily lament and bewail the Sins of others; eſpecially the great and crying Sins of the Nation, committed by all Ranks and Orders of men amongſt us, and whereby the wrath and indignation of Almighty God hath been ſo juſtly incenſed againſt us.

This hath been the temper and practice of good men in all Ages, to be greatly troubled and afflicted for the Sins of others, as well as for their own; to mourn for them in ſecret, as the Prophet *Jeremy* does for the obſtinacy and impenitency of the *Jews*, and for the terrible Judgments and Calamities which their Sins were ready to bring down upon them: *But if ye*

Jer. 13. 17.

will

will not return, ſays he to that obdurate People, *my ſoul ſhall weep in ſecret places for your pride*, or obſtinacy; *and mine eyes ſhall weep ſore and run down with tears, becauſe the Lords Flock is carried away captive.* And indeed almoſt the whole Prophecy of *Jeremy*, and his Book of *Lamentations*, are little elſe but a perpetual humiliation and mourning for the Sins of that People, and for the Judgments of God which he ſaw already inflicted, or foreſaw to be coming upon them.

We reade likewiſe of *Lot*, when he dwelt in *Sodom*, how *he was vexed with the filthy converſation of the wicked: For that righteous man*, ſaith St. *Peter*, *dwelling among them, in ſeeing and hearing vexed his righteous ſoul, from day to day, with their unlawfull deeds.*

Holy *David* alſo, upon all occaſions, teſtifies his great trouble and grief for the Sins which he ſaw committed by others, and was ſo affected with them that he trembled at the very thought of them: *Rivers of tears*, ſays he, *run down mine eyes, becauſe men keep not thy Law*: And in the ſame *Pſalm*, *Horrour hath taken hold of me, becauſe of the wicked which forſake thy Law*: And again, *I beheld the tranſgreſſours and was grieved, becauſe they kept not thy Word.* *Pſalm* 119. 36. v. 53. v. 158.

And

And how does *Daniel* humble himſelf before God and mourn, and in the name of all the People, and of all Degrees and Orders of men among them, take ſhame to himſelf and them, for the great Sins which they had been guilty of?

Dan. 9. 5,7, 8. *We have ſinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly: O Lord, righteouſneſs belongeth unto thee, but unto us confuſion of face, as at this day: To our Kings, to our Princes, and to our Fathers, becauſe we have ſinned againſt thee.*

With what trouble and confuſion does *Ezra*, upon a ſolemn Day of faſting and humiliation, acknowledge and bewail the Sins of the People?

Ezr. 9. 6, 7. *O my God,* ſays he, *I am aſhamed and bluſh to lift up my face to thee my God: For our iniquities are increaſed over our heads, and our treſpaſſes grown up unto the heavens: Since the days of our Fathers, we have been in a great treſpaſs unto this day; and for our iniquities have we, our King, and our Prieſts, been delivered into the hands of the Kings of the Lands,* &c.

And thus alſo ought we, the People of this ſinfull Land, upon this ſolemn Day of faſting and humiliation, to ſet our Sins in order before us, with all their heinous aggravations; and in the bitterneſs of our ſouls to lament and bewail that

that general prevalence of Impiety and Vice which hath overſpread the Nation, and diffuſed it ſelf through all Ranks and Degrees of men, *Magiſtrates*, *Miniſters* and *People*. I ſhall ſpeak ſomething more particularly concerning each of theſe.

1. The Sins of the *Magiſtrates* and thoſe that are in Authority. They that make Laws for others, and are to ſee to the execution of them, ought to be ſtrict obſervers of them themſelves. For it muſt needs put a man not a little out of countenance to be ſevere upon thoſe faults in others of which he knows himſelf to be notoriouſly guilty. And yet how many are there, whoſe place and duty it is to correct the vices and immoralities of others, who are far from being examples of vertue themſelves? And therefore it is no wonder that there is ſo lame and unequal a diſtribution of juſtice in the Nation, and that Magiſtrates are ſo cold and ſlack in the diſcountenancing of Vice and Impiety, and in putting the good and wholeſome Laws made againſt them in execution: As againſt the profanation of the Lord's Day, by ſecular buſineſs, by vain ſports and paſtimes, which by the very nature of them are apt to diſſolve the minds

of men into mirth and pleaſure, and to carry them off from all ſerious thoughts of God and Religion, and from the meditations of another World; and to give the Devil an advantage, and an opportunity, which he never fails to take, to ſteal *the good ſeed*, the Word of God, which they have heard that Day, out of their hearts, and to make it of none effect: And which is yet worſe, by lewd and ſinfull practices, which are unlawfull at any time, but upon that Day, are a double breach and violation of God's Law.

And likewiſe by neglecting to put in execution the Laws againſt profane *Swearing* and *Curſing*, for which the Land mourns; and againſt *Drunkenneſs*, and *Adultery*, and *Fornication*, which are ſo common, and ſo impudently committed amongſt us: whether they be Civil, or Eccleſiaſtical Laws; and it is hard to ſay which of them are moſt remiſſly executed.

And to mention no more, by neglecting to proſecute that horrible Sin of *Murther*, ſo frequently now committed in our Streets beyond the example of former Ages, with that ſeverity and impartiality which is neceſſary to free the Nation from the guilt of that crying Sin which

which calls ſo loud to Heaven for vengeance.

And all this, notwithſtanding the Magiſtrates are under the Oath of God to put the Laws in due execution againſt all theſe Crimes, ſo far as they come to their knowledge, and fall under their cogniſance.

2. The Sins of the *Miniſters*, who ſerve at God's Altar, and watch over the Souls of men, whoſe bloud will be required at their hands, if any of them periſh through their fault and neglect. There is no reaſon to doubt, but that there are a good number of faithfull Shepherds in the Land, who watch over their Flocks with great care and conſcience, remembring the dreadfull account which they muſt one day make to *Him who ſhall judge the quick and dead*, of the Souls committed to their charge.

But yet how groſly do many of us fail of the faithfull diſcharge of the ſubſtantial parts of this high Office? wanting a juſt ſenſe of the ineſtimable worth and value of the Souls of men for whom Chriſt died; taking little or no care to inſtruct them in the good knowledge of the Lord, and to lead them in the way to eternal happineſs by an exemplary converſation.

Nay too many among us demean themſelves

ſo ſcandalouſly, as perfectly to undermine the credit and effect of their Doctrine by leading lives ſo directly contrary to it; and to alienate their People from the Church, and to make them to abhorr the Sacrifice and Service of the Lord by their wicked and unhallowed converſations: hereby expoſing them to the craft of Seducers, and rendring them an eaſie prey to the *Emiſſaries* of the Church of *Rome*, or to any other Sect and Faction that pretends a greater zeal for Religion, or makes a better ſhew of a ſtrict and unblameable life.

For who will regard or believe thoſe Teachers, who give all the evidence that can be by their lives and actions, that they do not believe themſelves and their own Doctrines? When all is ſaid, the life and manners of the Preacher are the beſt eloquence, and have that dint and power of perſuaſion in them, which no words, no art can equal. Who ſo lives as he ſpeaks, does, as it is ſaid of our Bleſſed *Saviour*, *ſpeak as one that hath authority, and not as the Scribes: not as the Scribes*; whoſe words, notwithſtanding all the formality and gravity with which they were deliver'd, did therefore want weight and force, becauſe, as our *Saviour* tells us of them,

them, *they ſaid, but did not*; their Lives were not anſwerable to their Doctrines: Whereas our Bleſſed Saviour therefore *ſpoke as never man ſpake*, becauſe he liv'd as never man liv'd; ſo innocent, ſo uſefull, ſo exemplary a life: He *was holy, harmleſs, and undefil'd*: He *did no ſin, neither was guile found in his lips*: He *fulfilled all righteouſneſs, and went about doing good.* This was that which made Him ſo powerfull *a Preacher of Righteouſneſs*; and we muſt neceſſarily fall ſo much ſhort of *Him* in the authority and efficacy of our *Sermons*, as we do in the holineſs and goodneſs of our Lives. Such a Preacher, and ſuch a practice as that of our Bleſſed *Saviour* was, is every way fitted to reprove, and perſuade, and reform Mankind.

We now live in an Age and Church, wherein they who are called to be the Teachers and Guides of Souls ought to take great heed both to their Doctrine and their Lives; that the Name of God may not be blaſphem'd, and his holy Religion be brought into contempt by thoſe, who, above all others, are moſt nearly concern'd to preſerve and ſupport the credit and honour of it.

And we cannot but ſee, how our Religion

and

and Church are beſet and endanger'd on every ſide; by the rude aſſaults of Infidelity, and by the cunning arts of ſeducing Spirits, and by our own inteſtine Heats and Diviſions: And it can never be ſufficiently lamented, no though it were with tears of bloud, that we whoſe particular charge and employment it is to build up the Souls of men in a holy Faith, and in the reſolution of a good Life, ſhould, for want of due inſtruction, and by the diſſolute and profligate lives of too many among us, and by inflaming our needleſs Differences about leſſer things, have ſo great a hand in pulling down Religion, and in betraying the Souls of men either to downright infidelity, or to a careleſs neglect and profane contempt of all Religion.

May not God juſtly expoſtulate this matter with us, as he did of old with the People of the *Jews*? *A wonderfull and horrible thing is committed in the Land; the Prophets prophecy falſly, and the Prieſts bear rule by their means, and my People love to have it ſo, and what will ye doe in the end thereof?* When they who are the Paſtors and Guides of Souls, have by their ill conduct and management brought matters to that paſs, that the generality of the People ſit down con-

*Jer.*5.30,31.

tented

tented with the worſt ſtate of things, and are become almoſt indifferent whether they have any Religion or not, what can the end of theſe things be, but that *the Kingdom of God will be taken from us, and given to a Nation that will bring forth the fruits of it?*

If ever there be a publick Reformation among us, it muſt begin at the Houſe of God; and they who are the Miniſters of Religion muſt lead on this work, and be more carefull and conſcientious in the diſcharge of that high and holy Office which is committed to them by *the Great Shepherd and Biſhop of Souls.* Elſe, what ſhall we ſay when God ſhall challenge us, as he once did the Paſtours of the *Jewiſh* Church, by his Prophet, ſaying, *Where is the Flock that was given thee, thy beautifull Flock? what wilt thou ſay when He ſhall puniſh thee?* *Jer.* 13. 20, 21.

3. The Sins of the *People*; amongſt whom there is almoſt an univerſal corruption and depravation of Manners; inſomuch that Impiety and Vice ſeem to have overſpread the face of the Nation; ſo that we may take up that ſad complaint of the Prophet concerning the People of *Iſrael*, and apply it to our ſelves; that we *are a ſinfull Nation, a People laden with iniquity, a ſeed* *Iſai.* 1. 4, 5.

ſeed of evil doers; that *the whole head is ſick, and the whole heart faint*; and that *from the ſole of the foot even to the head, there is no ſoundneſs in us, but wounds, and bruiſes, and putrifying ſores.*

We may juſtly ſtand amaz'd to conſider, how *the God of all patience* is provok'd by us every day; to think, how long he hath born with us and *ſuffered our manners*; our open Profaneneſs, and Infidelity; our great Immoralities, and groſs Hypocriſy; our inſolent contempt of Religion, and our ill-favour'd counterfeiting of it for low and ſordid ends: And, which is the moſt melancholy conſideration of all the reſt, we ſeem to be degenerated to that degree, that it is very much to be fear'd, there is hardly integrity enough left amongſt us to ſave us.

And then if we conſider further our moſt uncharitable and unchriſtian Diviſions, to the endangering both of our Reformed Religion, and of the Civil Rights and Liberties of the Nation: Our incorrigibleneſs under the Judgments of God which we have ſeen abroad in the Earth, and which have in a very ſevere and terrible manner been inflicted upon theſe Kingdoms, that the *Inhabitants thereof might learn righteouſneſs*: Our inſenſibleneſs of the Hand of God, ſo viſible in his

his late Providences towards us, and in the many merciful and wonderful Deliverances which from time to time He hath wrought for us.

And laſtly, if we reflect upon our horrible Ingratitude to God our Saviour and mighty Deliverer; and to Them likewiſe whom He hath ſo ſignally honour'd in making them the happy means and Inſtruments of our Deliverance: And this, not only expreſs'd by a bold contempt of their Authority, but by a moſt unnatural conſpiracy againſt Them with the greateſt Enemies not onely to the Peace of the Nation, but likewiſe to the Reformed Religion therein profeſs'd and by Law eſtabliſhed; and to the intereſt of it all the World over.

So that we may ſay with *Ezra*, *and now, O our God, what ſhall we ſay unto thee after this?* And may not God likewiſe ſay to us, as He did more then once to the *Jews? ſhall I not viſit for theſe things, ſaith the Lord, and ſhall not my ſoul be avenged on ſuch a Nation as this?* *Ezra.* 9. 6.

Thirdly, we ſhould likewiſe, upon this Day, earneſtly deprecate God's diſpleaſure, and make our humble Supplications to Him, that He would be graciouſly pleas'd to avert thoſe

terrible Judgments which hang over us, and which we have just cause to fear may fall upon us; and that He would be entreated by us at last to be appeas'd towards us, and to turn from the fierceness of his Anger.

This we find the People of God were wont to do upon their Solemn days of Fasting and Prayer, and this God expresly enjoyns: *Blow the Trumpet in* Zion, *sanctify a Fast, call a solemn Assembly; gather the People, sanctify the Congregation, assemble the Elders,* &c. *Let the Priests, the Ministers of the Lord, weep between the Porch and the Altar, and let them say, Spare thy People, O Lord, and give not thy heritage to reproach, that the Heathen should rule over them: Wherefore should they say among the People, where is their God?*

Joel 2. 15, 16, 17.

And to this earnest deprecation of his Judgments God promiseth a gracious answer; for so it immediately follows: *Then will the Lord be jealous for his Land, and pity his People.*

V. 18.

And thus likewise *Daniel*, when he set his face *to seek the Lord God, by prayer and supplication, with fasting and sackcloth and ashes*, does in a most humble and earnest manner deprecate the displeasure of God towards his People, and

Dan. 9.3.

and beg of Him to remove his Judgments and to turn away his anger from them, *O Lord, according to all thy righteouſneſs, I beſeech thee, let thine anger and thy Jury be turned away from thy City* Jeruſalem, *thy Holy Mountain: Becauſe for our ſins, and for the iniquity of our Fathers,* Jeruſalem *and thy People are become a reproach to all that are about us. Now therefore, O God, hear the prayer of thy Servant and his ſupplication; and cauſe thy face to ſhine upon thy Sanctuary which is deſolate, for the Lord's ſake. O my God, incline thine ear and hear, open thine eyes and behold our deſolations, and the City which is called by thy Name: For we do not preſent our ſupplications before thee for our righteouſneſs, but for thy great mercy: O Lord hear, O Lord forgive, O Lord hearken and do; defer not for thine own ſake, O my God; for thy City and thy People are called by thy Name.* Ver. 16. 17, 18. 19.

And thus alſo ſhould We, upon this Solemn Occaſion, cry mightily unto God, and with the greateſt importunity deprecate thoſe terrible Judgments which we ſo righteouſly have deſerv'd, and to which the great and crying Sins of the whole Nation have ſo juſtly expoſed us: Humbly beſeeching Him, not for our righteouſ-

neſs, but for his great mercy; for his own Names ſake, and becauſe we are his People and are called by his Name, and becauſe his Holy Truth and Religion are profeſs'd amongſt us; that He would be pleas'd to hear the prayers of his Servants and their ſupplications which they have made before him this Day, *for the Lord's ſake.*

Fourthly, we ſhould likewiſe, upon this Day, pour out our moſt earneſt Supplications to Almighty God, for the preſervation of their *Majeſties* ſacred Perſons, and for the proſperity and eſtabliſhment of their Government, and for the good ſucceſs of their Arms and Forces by Sea and Land.

And more eſpecially, ſince His *Majeſty*, with ſo many Confederate Princes and States of *Europe*, is engaged in ſo neceſſary an undertaking for the Common good of *Chriſtendom*, and for the mutual preſervation and recovery of their reſpective Rights: We ſhould earneſtly implore the favour and aſſiſtance of Almighty God in ſo juſt and glorious a Cauſe, againſt the common Invader and oppreſſour of the Rights and Liberties of Mankind.

And

And that of his infinite Goodneſs He would be graciouſly pleaſed to take the Perſon of our *Soveraign Lord* the *King* into the particular care and protection of his Providence: That He would ſecure his precious Life from all ſecret Attempts, and from open Violence: That He would give his Angels Charge over him, and cover his head in the day of Battel, and crown it with victory over his Enemies, and reſtore Him to us again in ſafety.

And that He would likewiſe preſerve and direct the *Queen's Majeſty*, in whoſe hands the Adminiſtration of the Government is at preſent ſo happily plac'd: That He would give Her wiſdom and reſolution for ſuch a Time as this, and ſupport and carry Her through all the Difficulties of it.

And laſtly, that He would bleſs them Both with a long Life, and a peaceful and happy Reign over us; that *under them we may live quiet and peaceable lives in all godlineſs and honeſty.*

Fifthly, our Faſting and humiliation ſhould be accompanyed with our Alms and Charity to the poor and needy: And we ſhould every one of us, according to the counſel given by the

Dan. 4. 27. the Prophet to King *Nebuchadnezzer*, *break off our ſins by righteouſneſs, and our iniquities by ſhewing mercy to the poor, if it may be a lengthning of our tranquillity*; hereby intimating that if there be any way to prevent or remove the Judgments of God, and to prolong the tranquillity and happineſs of Prince and People, a ſincere Repentance, and a great Charity to them that are in neceſſity and diſtreſs, are moſt likely to prevail with God, not only to reſpite the ruine of a ſinful People, but to incline Him to thoughts of peace towards them: For ſo he promiſeth to the *Jews* upon their ſincere Repentance, and earneſt Supplication to Him, which are alwayes accompanied with Charity to the poore: *For I know the thoughts which I think towards you, ſaith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an unexpected end: Then ſhall ye call upon me, and ye ſhall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you: And ye ſhall ſeek me, and find me, when ye ſhall ſearch for me with all your heart.*

Jer. 29. 11, 12, 13.

And I have often thought that the extraordinary Charity of this whole Nation, and of our pious Princes who are ſo ready to every good work and ſuch bright and ſhining Examples in this

this kind, more than once ſo ſeaſonably extended to the relief of our diſtreſſed Brethren, who fled hither for refuge from the Rage and Cruelty of their Perſecutors: I ſay, I have often thought, that this very thing, next to the infinite mercy and goodneſs of Almighty God, hath had a very particular influence upon our preſervation and deliverance from thoſe terrible Calamities which were juſt ready to ruſh in upon us. And what cauſe have we to thank God who hath allotted to us this more bleſſed and merciful part, to *give* and not to *receive*; to be free from perſecution our ſelves, that ſo we might be in a capacity to give refuge and relief to them that were perſecuted?

There are but few that have the faith to believe it, but certainly Charity to the poor is a great ſecurity to us in times of evil: So *David* aſſures us, ſpeaking of the *righteous* or *Charitable* man, *He ſhall not*, ſayes he, *be afraid in the evil time, and in the days of Dearth he ſhall be ſatisfy'd.*

And ſo likewiſe in Times of publick Diſtreſs, when we are beſet with cruel and powerful Enemies, who if God were not on our ſide would ſwallow us up, the publick Charity of a Nation

on hath many times prov'd its beſt ſafeguard and ſhield: *It ſhall fight for thee*, ſaith the Son of *Sirach*, ſpeaking of the Charity of Almes, *againſt thine Enemy, more than a mighty ſhield and ſtrong ſpear.*

And of this, as I ſaid before, I doubt not but We of this Nation, by the great mercy and goodneſs of God to us, have had happy experience in our late wonderful Deliverance under the Conduct and Valour of one of the beſt and braveſt of Princes; to whom by too many among us, the moſt unworthy and unthankful returns have been made for all the unwearied pains he hath undergone, and for the many deſperate hazards to which he hath expoſed himſelf for our ſakes, that ever were made to ſo great and generous a Benefactour: To ſo great a Benefactor, I ſay, not onely to theſe Nations, but even to all *Europe*, in aſſerting and maintaining their Liberties againſt the inſolent pride and unjuſt encroachments of one of the greateſt Oppreſſors the World hath known for many Ages: Of whom it may be ſaid as *Job* doth of the *Leviathan*, *upon the earth there is not his like*: I am glad I cannot apply what immediately follows,

Job 41. 33. 34.

lows, that *he is made without fear*; but ſurely the next words are oppoſite enough, *he beholdeth all high things, and is King of all the children of pride:* And yet *He that is Higher than the higheſt*, even *He that ſitteth in the Heavens doth laugh at him, for He ſeeth that his Day is coming.*

To conclude this *Particular*; if we would have our Prayers aſcend up to Heaven and find acceptance there, our Almes muſt go along with them: So the *Angel* intimates when he ſays to *Cornelius, thy Prayers and thine Almes are gone up for a memorial before God:* Thy *Prayers* and thine *Almes*; they muſt go together if we deſire that our Prayers ſhould be effectual. And the Prophet *Iſaiah*, ſpeaking of the *Faſt which God hath choſen*, and which is *acceptable* to Him, makes Charity and Almes a moſt eſſential part of it: *Is it not*, ſays he, *to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are caſt out to thy houſe; when thou ſeeſt the naked that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thy ſelf from thine own fleſh; Then ſhalt thou call and the Lord ſhall anſwer; thou ſhalt cry, and He ſhall ſay, here I am.*

Act. 10. 4.

Iſa. 58. 7, 9.

Sixthly and laſtly, we ſhould proſecute our Repentance and good reſolutions to the actual Reformation and amendment of our Lives. For in *this* Repentance doth mainly conſiſt: This is the proper fruit and effect of all our humiliation and good reſolutions, to forſake our ſins, and to become better for the future; more pious and devout towards God, more ſober and chaſt with regard to our ſelves, more juſt and charitable, more humble and meek towards all men: In a word, more innocent, more uſeful, and more *holy in all manner of converſation.*

And without this, all our Faſting and humiliation, our moſt earneſt Prayers and Supplications, will ſignifie nothing: All our ſorrow and teares will be but as water ſpilt upon the ground, and will not turn to any account either to ſave our own Souls, or to preſerve *this untoward generation, this crooked and perverſe Nation*, from ruin and deſtruction. So God tells *Solomon*, that this is the onely way to appeaſe and reconcile Him to a ſinful People: *If my People which is called by my Name ſhall humble themſelves, and pray, and ſeek my face, and turn from their wicked ways:*

2 *Chron.* 7. 14.

Then

Then will I hear in Heaven, and forgive their ſin, and heal their Land.

And if this were the happy effect of our Prayers and Humiliation this Day, to *turn us from our wicked* ways; God would then turn away his anger from us; and, as he promiſed to the *Jews* by the Prophet *Zechary*, He would turn theſe our monthly Faſts *into joy, and gladneſs, and cheerful Feaſts*; as he hath in a great meaſure already done, *Bleſſed be his great and glorious Name.* *Zech.* 8. 19.

But if we will not hearken and obey, can we expect that God ſhould deliver us from the hands of our Enemyes that we may ſin againſt Him without fear all the dayes of our Lives? To what purpoſe ſhould the Providence of God take ſo much care to preſerve our Religion to us, when we make no better uſe of it for the direction and government of our Lives? When it ſerves moſt of us, onely to talk of it; and too many amongſt us, to talk againſt it, to deride it, and deſpitefully to uſe it. If this be the truth of our Caſe, what can we ſay, why the Kingdom of God ſhould not be taken from us and given to a Nation that will bring forth the fruits of it? What can

we ſay, why our Candleſtick ſhould not be remov'd, and the light of the glorious Goſpel of *Chriſt* which we have ſo long enjoyed, and ſo long rebelled againſt, ſhould not be utterly extinguiſh'd amongſt us?

And if I cannot prevail with you to come to theſe good Reſolutions, and to make them good: If you will not be perſwaded to practiſe, yet be pleas'd to attend to what we ſay: Hear our words at leſt, if ye will not do them. This the People of the *Jews* would do, when they were at the worſt: So God tells the *Prophet* concerning them: *They come unto thee, as the People cometh; and they ſit before thee, as my People; and they hear thy words, but they will not do them.*

Ezek. 33. 31.

I had much rather at any time have occaſion to praiſe than to reprove, eſpecially in this great Aſſembly: And yet it is not to be diſſembled, that the behaviour of too many in this Place is frequently ſo careleſs and irreverent, as is very misbecoming thoſe who are in the more peculiar Preſence of the great and glorious *Majeſty of Heaven and Earth*, and profeſs at that very time to worſhip Him.

I am ſure, we have a better Pattern perpetually

tually before us; of a decent and unaffected devotion, of a moſt ſerious and ſteddy attention, without wandring, without diverſion, and without drowſineſs: ſuch an Example as I cannot but hope will in a ſhort time gain upon us all, and by a more gentle and ſilent reproof win us to the imitation of it.

And if we could but be prevail'd upon to demean our ſelves with that Reverence, and to hear with that Attention, which becomes the Worſhip and the Word of God, it might then be hop'd that we would conſider what is ſaid; and conſideration would probably work conviction, and conviction bring us to a better mind, and to a firm purpoſe of doing what we are inwardly convinc'd it is both our duty and our intereſt to do.

Let us then go away from this Solemnity, with a reſolution to do every one what we ought; truly and earneſtly to repent us of our ſins paſt, and to lead a new life for the future; to fear that *great and terrible God* in whoſe preſence we have humbled our ſelves this Day; and to *turn to Him that hath ſmitten us*, leſt we provoke him *to puniſh us yet ſeven times more*, and after that *ſeven times more for our ſins*, and for

for our impenitency in them, till at last *He make our plagues wonderfull.*

To conclude; let us every one, with that true Penitent in *Job*, take words to our selves and say, *surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have born chastisement, I will not offend any more; that which I see not teach thou me, and if I have done iniquity, I will do no more. Oh! that were such a heart in us, that it might be well with us, and with our children for ever.*

Which God of his infinite Goodness grant, for his mercyes sake in *Jesus Christ*: To whom with thee O *Father* and the *Holy Ghost*, be all Honour and Glory, both now and ever, *Amen.*

FINIS.